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I would like to thank Rep. Meisner for inviting me to speak, and Chairman Gaffney and the Health Policy Committee for hearing testimony on this issue.

Good Morning. My name is Matt Pianko, and I'm a college senior, an undergraduate researcher, and a pre-med student at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

*This issue is about curing the sick and ending unnecessary human suffering. Embryonic stem cell research will lead to breakthroughs in modern medicine that may cure many diseases.*

*I want to tell you about something horrible that happened to me four years ago. My best friend, Marty LeBaron, lost a hard fought battle with cancer at the tragic young age of 18. We don't know for sure, but stem-cell research might provide innovative chemotherapies that might have saved his life.*

I feel that stem-cell research is one of the most promising avenues for modern medicine. Driven by my friend's death, I founded a chapter of the Student Society for Stem Cell Research at U-M last fall to unite other young innovative minds who want to explore the promise of stem-cell research.

On the promise of stem cells, Senator Bill Frist once said: **"...the promise is powerful enough that I believe this research deserves our increased energy and focus."**

*But there are obstacles in the way of this promise, and these obstacles are the laws that restrict stem-cell research in the state of Michigan. These laws drive away the leaders and best in stem-cell research to other states like California and New Jersey, two states that embrace the promise of stem-cell research.*

We are already losing our creative researchers to other states. For example, last year Dr. Michael Clarke, co-discoverer of cancer stem cells in breast cancer, left the University of Michigan for California's Stanford University. Dr. Clarke brought with him his company, OncoMed Pharmaceuticals, which aims to create creative chemotherapies based on stem-cell research, the same type of therapies which might have helped my friend beat cancer.

*Recently, I e-mailed Dr. Clarke to ask him why he left Michigan. On the current laws, Dr. Clarke said, "They certainly played a significant role in my decision. The Michigan laws will be harmful in many ways. They will affect recruitment of scientists to the state, they will slow down discoveries that could lead to better treatment of patients with life-threatening and debilitating diseases, and it will hinder new business in the life-sciences."*

*Let me read you more from his response:*

**"The restrictions will hinder research on stem cells in general and on cancer stem cells in particular. In my opinion, these will lead to increased pain and suffering of many people with serious diseases, including cancer. OncoMed is doing well, and has created more than 20 high tech jobs, with more to come."**

*So, I'm here today to tell you that I oppose these laws that limit stem-cell research and increase suffering in the state of Michigan. As a future physician and potential researcher deciding where I will go after I graduate, I'm here today to tell you that I will look for a state that supports my innovative future and my future patients. Because of these laws which restrict stem-cell research, I'm here today to tell you that I am tempted to think--my future is not in Michigan.*

I want to live in a state which values its patients, a state which values its college graduates, and a state which values its economy and looks to the future. Many people have said that the Michigan's Life Science Corridor will be an important source of jobs in the future, and these restrictive laws will prevent many of those jobs from becoming a reality.

I hope these laws do change, because I like Michigan, and I hope that in the future I can stay in Michigan. However, as it stands today, for myself and students like me who want the best tools and the best training available, these laws tell us to follow the lead of Dr. Clarke and move to California, or any other state that supports the cutting edge of medicine.

*Don't let Michigan lose more of its innovative college graduates. Don't let another person like me lose a friend or family member if we don't have to. Support lifesaving cures and an end to unnecessary human suffering. Support Andy Meisner's bills, and change the laws that restrict stem-cell research in the state of Michigan.*